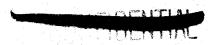
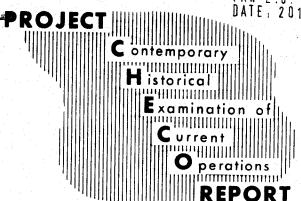
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COIN IN THAILAND JANUARY 1969 - DECEMBER 1970

1 JULY 1971

HQ PACAF
Directorate of Operations Analysis
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST DIVISION

Prepared by:

TSGT DON SMITH
Project CHECO 7th AF, DOAC

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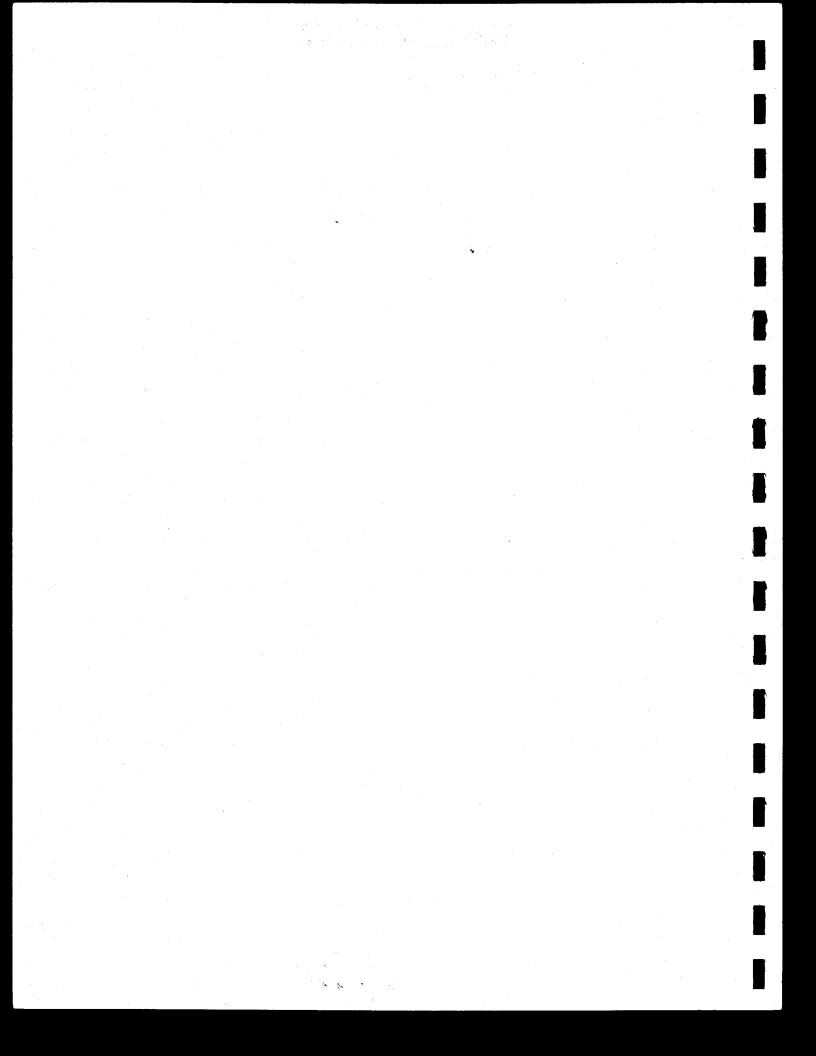
The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in the employment of USAF airpower to meet a multitude of requirements. The varied applications of airpower have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, there has been an accumulation of operational data and experiences that, as a priority, must be collected, documented, and analyzed as to current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity that would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction, and would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations, was established to meet this Air Staff requirement. Managed by Hq PACAF, with elements at Hq 7AF and 7AF/13AF, Project CHECO provides a scholarly, "on-going" historical examination, documentation, and reporting on USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in PACOM. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and examination which is being accomplished. It is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in PACOM when used in proper context. The reader must view the study in relation to the events and circumstances at the time of its preparation--recognizing that it was prepared on a contemporary basis which restricted perspective and that the author's research was limited to records available within his local headquarters area.

ERNEST C. HARVIN, JR., Major General, USAF

Chief of Staff





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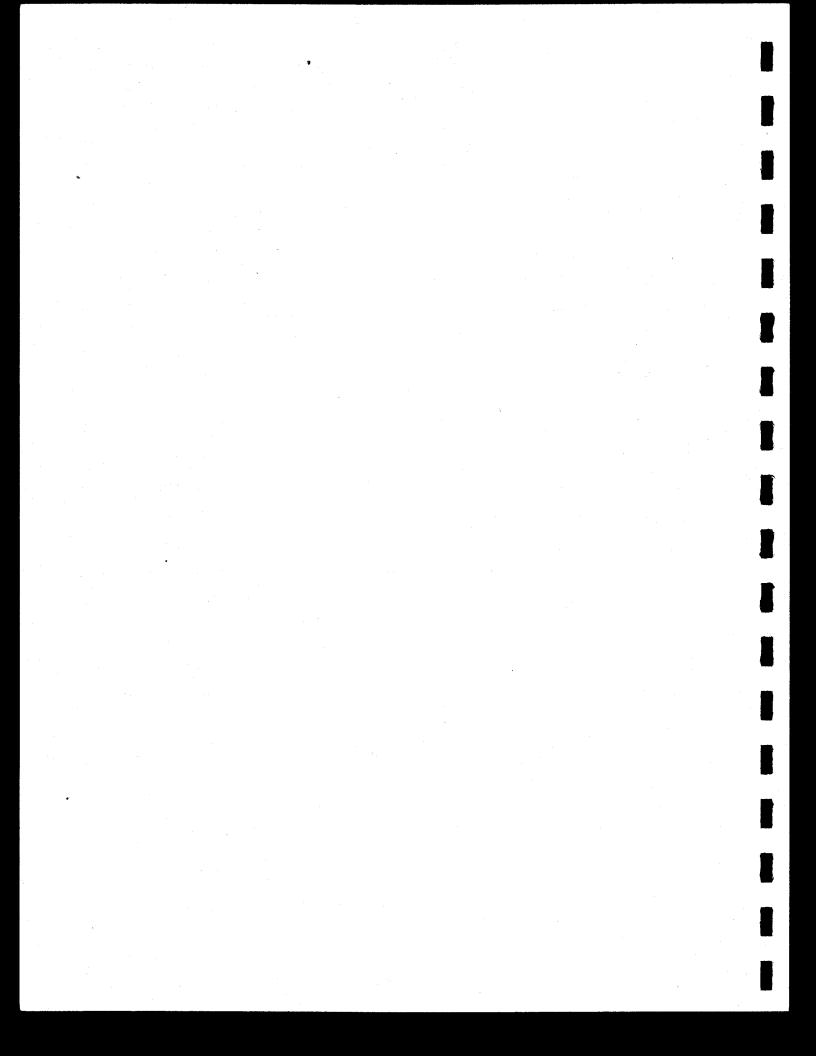
FOREWORD

This report, covering 1969 and 1970, is the third in a continuing series on counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts in Thailand. The first report covered the year 1966 and described the initial buildup of communist activity and early Royal Thai Government (RTG) attempts to counter this activity. The second report, covering 1967 and 1968, showed an increase in communist activity but relatively ineffective RTG countermeasures.

During the time frame covered by this report, communist activity reached new levels of intensity and showed a much higher degree of sophistication than ever before. At the same time the first serious steps were taken by the RTG to counter communist subversion. These efforts centered around the Second Anti-Communist Activities Law of May 1969. This law established the framework for RTG activities and provided clear lines of authority and responsibility.

In this report, communist and RTG activities in each of the four administrative regions--North, Northeast, Center, and South--will be covered separately. However, all operations were conducted within the context of the new Anti-Communist Activities Law.







CHAPTER I

THE THREAT

COIN in Thailand is the responsibility of the Royal Thai Government. Nevertheless, the threat to American presence still exists. Incidents involving Americans on and off the Royal Thai Air Force Bases continue even though not on a regular basis. These incidents prove that the insurgents are capable of carrying out an attack, or several attacks if they so choose, against our personnel and facilities whenever, wherever they decide.

--Maj. Gen. James F. Kirkendall Deputy Commander, 7/13AF

Insurgency, subversion, and defiance of government control were not new to Thailand in 1969. Many ethnic groups, power cliques, and geographic subdivisions of the country had opposed the central Bangkok government in one form or another since the end of World War II. All insurgency, subversion, and defiance of the RTG was not communist inspired, although the communists made every attempt to identify themselves with other dissident groups in order to swell the image of "popular" dissent.

Prior to 1969 the Government had alienated itself from many ethnic minorities, particularly the Meo hill tribes in the North and Northeast portions of Thailand, making them a prime target for communist subversion efforts.







A more unique problem facing the RTG was the presence of an estimated 40,000 Vietnamese refugees. Settled primarily in the Northeast, this group was estimated to be 90 percent Hanoi-oriented in thinking and loyalty, and provided an in-place base of support for Thai communist insurgents as well as Thai communist cadres infiltrated into the country from Laos and North Vietnam. Unlike many other minority groups in Thailand, the Vietnamese refugee community had not been assimilated into society and held rigidly to its own customs, language, and beliefs. Compounding the RTG's problem was the presence of the Lao Dong* cadre among the refugees. Although there was no evidence that the refugees, as a group, were actively engaged in the Thai insurgency, it was suspected that the Lao Dong cadre was linked to Communist Terrorist (CT) violence, and it was confirmed that they had assisted in exfiltrating Thais for out-of-country training in Laos, North Vietnam, and China.

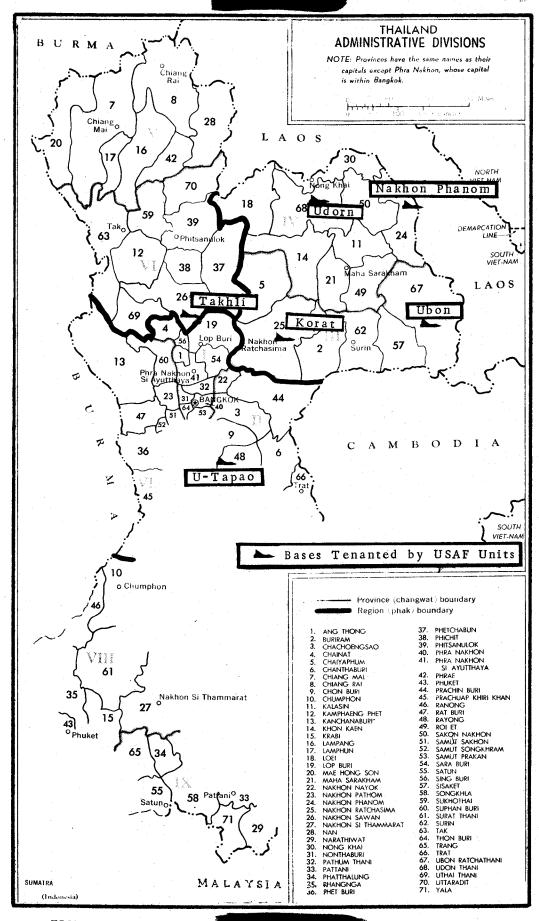
Because of CT out-of-country support through Laos, the communist threat to Thailand grew more serious in 1969, and in 1970 the country-wide incident rate was even greater than in 1969. Although the greatest threat was through Laos, it was not from the Laotian Communist Party, but rather from North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Chinese Communist (CHICOM) advisors who were assisting in training and supporting the Thailand-based CT along the Thailand-Laos border. Most of the provinces along the

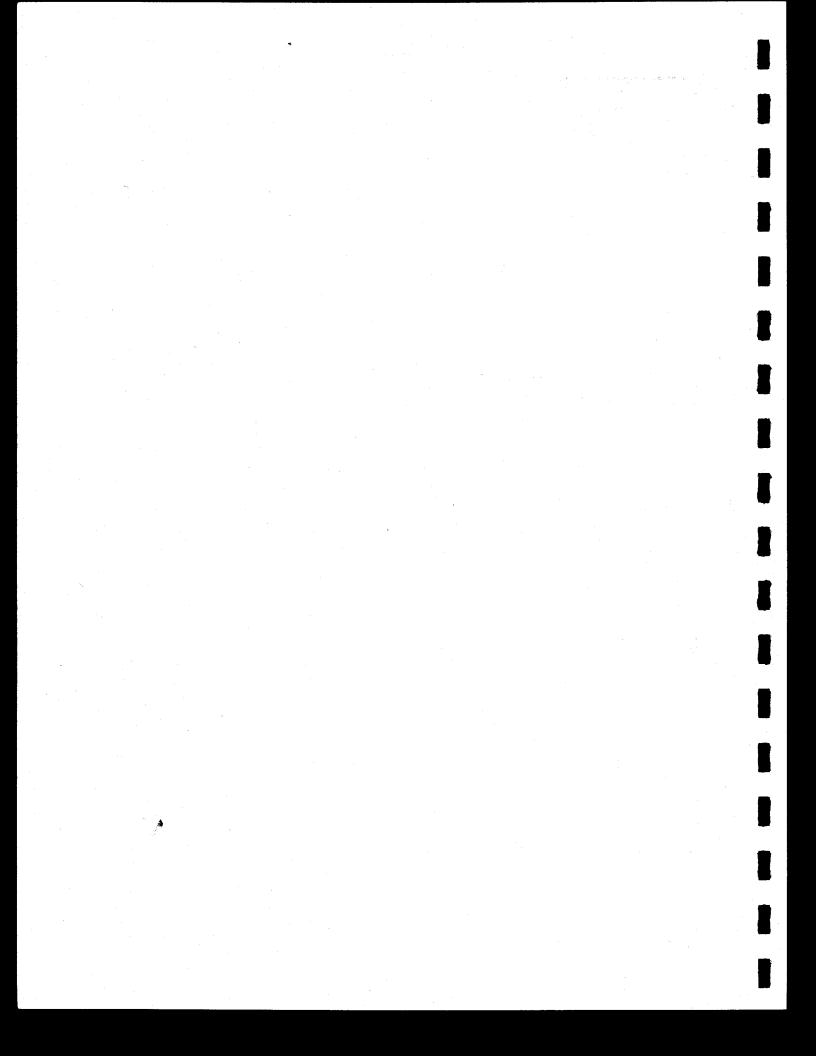
*Worker's Party of (North) Vietnam.





THE WAY







border had been under martial law for the previous 10 to 15 years, and the Thai Supreme Command had declared them "insurgency-threatened" areas.

All USAF-tenanted bases, with the exception of Takhli and U-Tapao, were located in these areas. Udorn, Ubon, and Nakhon Phanom, because of their proximity to communist supply bases in Laos, were within easy striking distance of Laos-based insurgents. As was pointed out by Maj. Gen. James F. Sirkendall, 7/13AF Deputy Commander:

An overnight march by a few men would easily put known enemy ordnance in reach of Udorn and Ubon, and it would not be required that they even cross the border to hit Nakhon Phanom.

By the end of 1970 there had been only three attacks against U.S. resources: Udorn, 18 July 1968; Ubon, 28 July 1969; and a second incident at Ubon, 13 January 1970. The CTs gained confidence in the use of sapper attacks on Udorn and the first attack on Ubon, but this confidence may have been eroded as a result of the abortive second attack at Ubon in which their entire known force was killed. Despite the failure of the attack on Ubon, the CT--directed by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and with financial and training support from Peking, Hanoi, and the Pathet Lao--were still capable of limited attacks against U.S. resources at any 6/ time.

A variety of worthwhile targets was available: radar and signal sites, personnel, and lines of communication—all of which were vulnerable to interdiction or sabotage. It was doubtful that the CT would attempt



- GUNHUERTIKE

large force operations against base facilities because of the risk and $\frac{7}{}$ fear of forcing the RTG into a more aggressive COIN posture.

Through the end of 1970, the RTG had concentrated more on containing the terrorists than eliminating their presence. Because of the nature and intensity of the insurgency in the various regions of the country, the Government found it difficult to operate a countrywide COIN program. It was hoped that procedures for integration of nationwide civilian, police, and military forces would be achieved through the passage of the Second Anti-Communist Activities Law in May 1969. Although the law did specify areas of command, control, and responsibility, it could not improve field leadership in the various regions.

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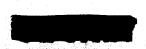
CHAPTER II

RTG POLICIES AND COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS

Insurgent activities in Thailand occurred in a regional pattern consisting of the Northeast, the North, the Center, and the South. The majority of infiltration occurred in the North and the Northeast, with $\frac{8}{}$ Chiang Rai, Nan, and Ubon provinces being the major points of entry. It was also in these areas that the insurgents tried to develop lines of communication from Laos for weapons and supplies. During early 1969 an increase in the number of insurgents in the Tri-Province area of Phitsanulok, Loei, and Phetchabun, along with more intensive recruiting in the area of Chiang Rai and Nan in 1970, brought the estimated strength of the armed "jungle soldiers" in the North to 1900.

As previously mentioned, the RTG took several steps in 1969 to improve its organizational and tactical efforts against communist insurgency. The most significant step was the passage of the Second Anti-Communist Activities Law in May 1969. This spelled out the national policy for COIN and integrated civilian, police, and military resources. It also established the Communist Suppression Operations Directorate (CSOD) with responsibility for:

- Establishing a communist suppression and prevention command.
- Ordering the ministries, departments, and other organizations at the central, regional, and provincial levels to cooperate and provide the necessary support and equipment for an effective suppression effort.
- Organizing a combined civilian-police-military division, appointing a director and assigning personnel.







 Organizing communist prevention and suppression committees in those changwats (province subdivisions) designated as areas of communist infiltration.

All units under the CSOD were instructed to "follow the concept of joint civilian-police-military (CPM) operation" with the intent of: (1) winning the people's confidence and providing them protection and security; (2) training the people to improve their own economic conditions and to defend their villages against the communist threat; and (3) basing communist prevention and suppression on political considerations, psychological operations, and public relations.

Under the new law, authority ran from the Ministry of Interior through the CSOD to the RTA commanders who were also designated Regional Communist Suppression Directors. This arrangement formalized the Army's dominant role in COIN efforts and gave the Army commanders more leverage over the police. It also gave the RTA authority over the provincial governors in COIN matters. This control of COIN by the military commander was legalized upon declaration of martial law in the 36 provinces where communist insurgents were most active.

It has been hoped that the need for martial law would be eliminated by the new 1969 law but, at Army insistence, martial law was retained. This was done to prevent law suits against the Army for crop or property damage caused by suppression operations. Martial law also eased procedures for acquiring land for military encampments and similar actions related to the COIN program.



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Although concern over insurgency was clearly rising, a number of organizational problems soon became apparent. These problems held back any great advance and caused the COIN effort in 1969 to be labeled an uncertain success.

The first problem to arise concerned the role of the CPM organization. Originally, the law placed the CPM staff directly under the CSOD and gave the CPM operational control over the regional Army commanders. Army leaders opposed this arrangement and recommended that the RTA head-quarters replace the CPM staff. After considerable in-fighting, the Army succeeded in gaining control of the CPM.

Another organizational struggle developed in the South between the Army and the existing COIN agency, the National Security Command (NSC). When the CSOD assumed national control of COIN it was with the understanding that the existing NSC would remain in charge of the southern border region. In spite of these early assurances, the RTA area commander expanded his own COIN activities partly in response to public criticism over the increasing number of communist inspired incidents. When the RTA commander became Regional Communist Suppression Director, he replaced the police commanders in the two NSC regions of the South. As martial law was retained, RTA headquarters was placed between CSOD and the regional commanders. Thus the chain of command in the South ran from the Ministry of Interior through the CSOD to the regional commander and finally to the NSC and CPM units. This arrangement reduced the NSC role in the South to





that of supporting an active Mobile Development Unit program and sharing membership with the CSOD on joint Thai-Malaysian committees for border $\frac{15}{}$ control and joint COIN operations.

As in the South, the CPM in the North was absorbed by CSOD; but in contrast to a direct subordinate role the CPM joined in a coordinated effort emphasizing psychological programs for the villages. Dubbed the CSOD Pilot Project in mid-1969, target areas were established in the North and a joint CSOD/CPM headquarters was organized with four subheadquarters. Both civilian police and Army personnel were tasked with training Village Protection Units (VPU) and were assisted by a \$60,000 social and economic development grant provided by the United States. American observers hopefully imagined the Pilot Project as "at least an armature for a coordinated counterinsurgency program." This also marked the beginning of nonmilitary counterinsurgency work.

By October 1969 it became obvious that the Pilot Project, although sound in concept, was a failure in the North. Because of limited military support, project-trained volunteers were sent back to their villages without weapons or radios and had to seek personal safety by remaining in the background. To make matters worse, the CT warned that the newly trained village security teams would be prime targets in their operations. In the face of these pressures the CSOD Pilot Project was suspended.

The RTG attempted to expand its COIN resources by adding more helicopters and military and police units, but it continued to experience



problems in the planning and execution of suppression operations. Quite often the overreaction of the suppression forces in the North, such as the forced resettlement of the Meo hill tribesmen, nullified RTG gains while psychological operations in the Tri-Province areas of Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Loei drew fire from some quarters as being too passive. In the Northeast the RTG's more lenient attitude toward the Vietnamese refugees was misinterpreted by North Vietnam and China as a sign that the RTG believed the Viet Cong were winning the war in Vietnam and therefore were trying to seek accommodations with Hanoi. Thus the RTG dilemma was acute: if they treated the communists too easily they would be accused of weakening for fear of Hanoi; on the other hand, if they were overly aggressive they would offend groups such as the hill tribes who, although they supported the insurgents to some degree, were not hard-core communists.

A more comprehensive review of insurgent activity and the RTG COIN effort is presented in the following chapters on regional activities. The RTG use of the Chinese Irregular Forces (CIF) for COIN in the North, the insurgency threat from Vietnamese refugees in the Northeast, and insurgency among the hill tribesmen of the North are also covered in these regional chapters.



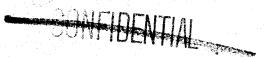


CHAPTER III NORTHERN REGION

In 1969 the Northern region was regarded as the most serious problem area for the RTG because the insurgents had maintained the initiative and consolidated their earlier gains in the highlands. The CT gains in the North were attributed to the Government's decision to decrease its presence along the mountainous Thailand-Laos border and to concentrate on the lowlands instead. Although the number of incidents and RTG casualties declined, these troops lost contact with the situation in the hill country and yet remained easy targets for small insurgent bands operating around the government camps. While the RTG confined its activities to the lowlands, the number of insurgents recruited locally and those infiltrated from Laos increased. It became evident in 1969 that the CT effort to build jungle support bases as well as village infrastructures was more intense and sophisticated than in previous years. fact, the CT presented such a growing threat in the North that many villagers in nill tribe settlements were ready to pack their belongings and evacuate the area.

In the absence of Government presence the CT had gained control of much of the border areas and had improved their capability to resupply their forces. In the Ngam Pao area of Nan, about 40 kilometers from a Laotian headquarters for insurgent supplies, it was reported that 210 cartloads of ammunition were delivered in late 1968. Furthermore, the





CHICOM road construction across northern Laos was moving closer to the Thai border, posing an increased threat of logistical support to insurgents. To provide more mobility in harassing RTG forces, the insurgents in the Tri-Province areas of Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Loei were reported traveling in small groups of 10 members or less. The insurgents in this area attacked a 10-man development unit for the first time in Thailand's $\frac{21}{}$ history in January 1969.

The CTs in Tak province, on the Burmese border, also increased their activities in 1969, but, on the recommendation of the provincial governor, the RTG chose not to actively carry out suppression operations in Tak. This lack of RTG action was believed to have accounted for the low level of overt activity; however, the CT increased their recruiting efforts and improved their village infrastructure in the province. Overall armed insurgent strength was estimated to have increased 50 percent in the last six months of 1970, as the insurgents continued to recruit and train Karen tribesmen as well as Meo villagers in preparation for attacks on road construction crews on the Meo Sot-Umphang road.

In 1970, the situation in the North worsened as the CT began to pose a direct threat to RTG control over the border areas of eastern Chiang Rai province and the Pua and Thung Chiang districts in Nan province. They systematically expanded into the lowlands surrounding Nan and westward across the Ing River Valley in Northeastern Chiang Rai province to the Doi Luang mountains. The CT in the North also strengthened their organization, improved contact with support elements in Laos and in the principal



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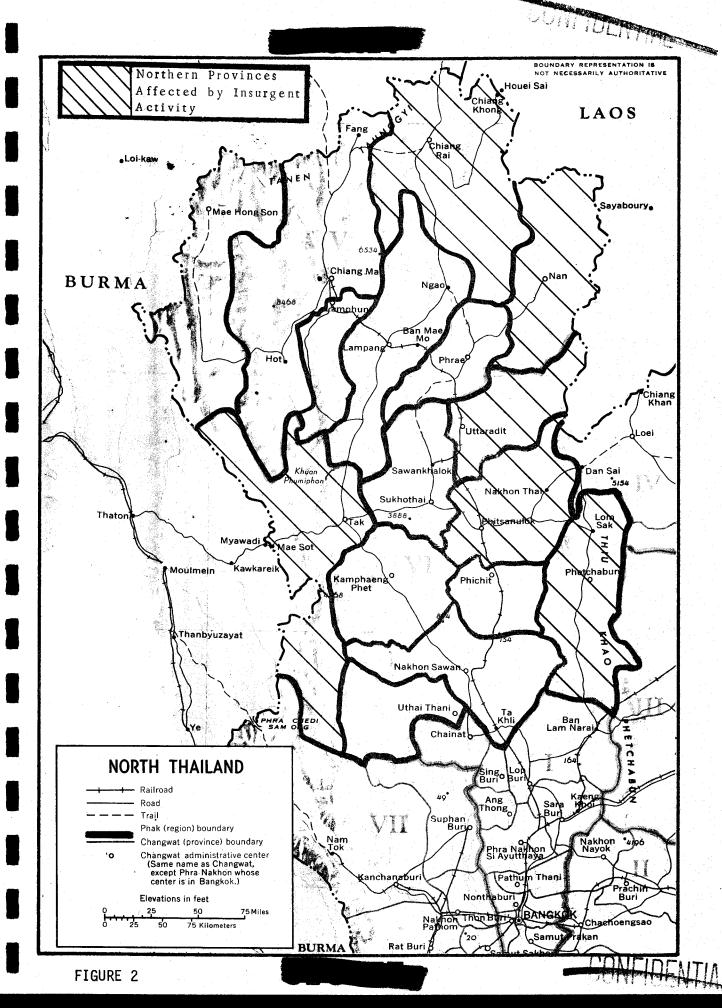
districts and provincial towns of the region. They also recruited additional "jungle soldiers" for their military ranks and were augmented by $\frac{23}{}$ cadres returning from out-of-country training.

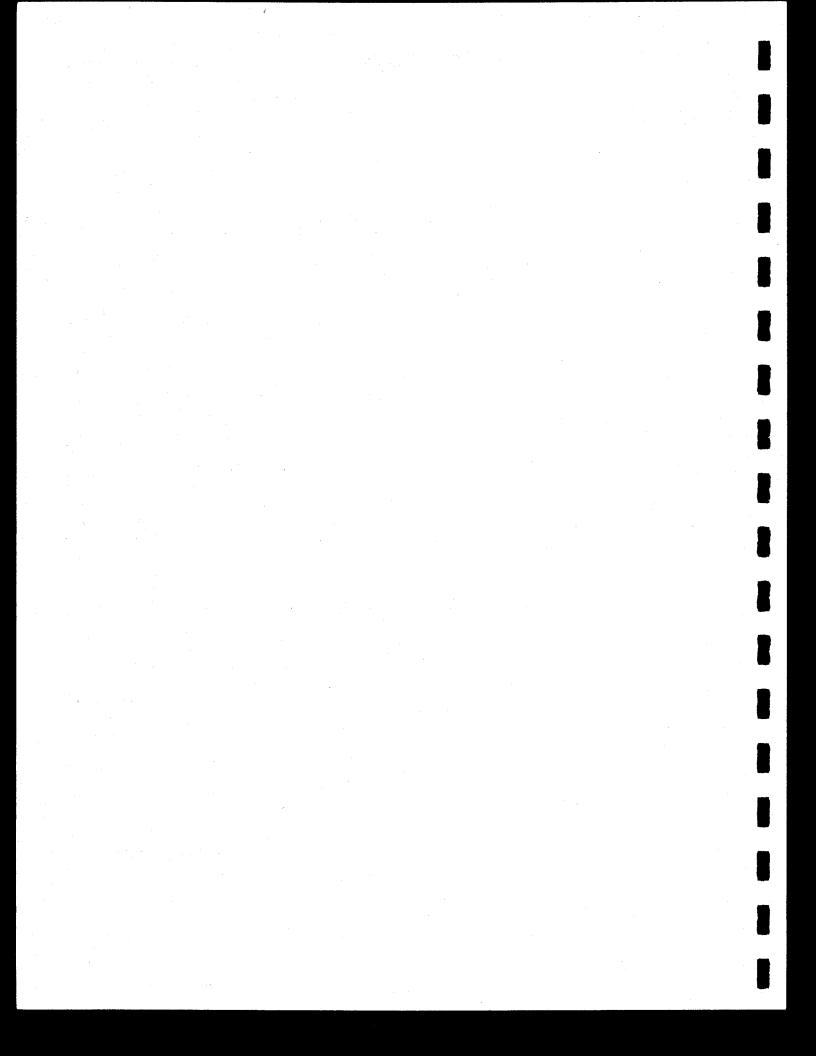
The organization in the North was controlled by the Northern Regional Headquarters, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). This headquarters previously was located in Moung Sai, Laos, but reportedly moved further south to Sayaboury province in an area just across the $\frac{24}{1000}$ Thailand-Laos border from Nan and Chiang Rai provinces.

In early 1969, under the Northern Regional Headquarters, seven CT area headquarters were identified. Their general areas of responsibility included the Duang Luang area of Chiang Rai, eastern Chiang Rai, the Chiang Klang district of Nan, and north of the Nan border in Sayaboury, Laos. This last area contained two headquarters which controlled the Pua and Thung Chang districts. Other CT headquarters units identified were in the Sa district of Nan province, in Tak province (around the Mai Sot-Umphang border), and in the Tri-Province area on the Phetchabun-Phitsanulok border. Each of these headquarters usually directed its own activities in its own area of operation. Until late 1970, it was believed that the eastern Chiang Rai headquarters was in charge of the entire province, but operations by Chinese irregulars in December 1970 uncovered documents which revealed that this was not the case.

By the end of 1969 four battalion headquarters were identified under the Northern Regional Headquarters: the Doi Pachi battalion on the Nan-Chiang Rai border, the Ban Nam Sa battalion in the Chiang Kham district







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of Chiang Rai, and two battalions in the Pua district of Nan. During the rainy season of 1970, they were reported as having a strength as high as 100 to 150, but this was not confirmed until October 1970 when the CT started using 100- to 120-man units to conduct armed propaganda in the Chiang Kham and Pong districts of Chiang Rai. Although these units were organized as standard communist battalions, with a normal strength of 300 men, they were dispersed throughout the area of operation into 10- or 20-man units. Despite this dispersion the battalions could assemble the smaller units for specific larger operations, following which they would again disperse, making it difficult for the RTG to find them.

The CT rank and file in the North was composed primarily of Meo tribesmen, although Tak province had a small number of Karen tribesmen. The leadership, or CT cadre, in the North were ethnic Thai or Sino-Thai except for a few educated Meo tribesmen.

In the remote areas of Chiang Rai, where the insurgents' influence was predominant, they concentrated on recruiting and training tribal guerrillas as well as mobilizing and indoctrinating the hill tribe populace. The CTs also initiated a "barefoot doctor" program as a form of propaganda, $\frac{28}{}$ recruitment, and pacification of the people in remote villages.

^{*}A program in which CT cadres trained selected Meo tribesmen in basic first aid. The tribesmen then worked in their own village, dispensing basic medical care and communist propaganda.



In some areas of Nan and Chiang Rai, the CTs actually denied the RTG access to the upland regions near the border and consolidated their control through a combination of armed violence, coercion, terror, and propaganda. In the Chiang Khong district of Chiang Rai, the CTs launched a concerted effort of harassing RTG patrols and officials in order to drive government forces from upland areas near the border and establish a de facto, if not declared, "liberated area." Also in Chiang Rai, the CTs set up a new district level command which included more than 100 armed guerrillas in the Doi Luang mountains of western Chiang Khong district.

The CTs improved their techniques and weaponry and scored propaganda successes as well as tactical victories in several encounters which saw the employment of M-79s, a high volume of automatic small arms fire, and Soviet nonmetallic antipersonnel mines. They also displayed an improved proficiency in engaging RTG aircraft and helicopters. Information received throughout the 1969 rainy season indicated that the CTs were undergoing extensive training in antiaircraft fire techniques with small arms weapons and the employment of mines and command detonated explosives, and this training was showing results in the 1970 dry season.

Their tactical successes included the standoff of a two-company operation in Pua, costly ambushes which curtailed RTG roadbuilding efforts in northern Nan, and overrunning a Hill Tribe Volunteer (HTV) training post in the Pong district of Chiang Rai. In each of these incidents, the CTs were reacting strongly and effectively after perceiving a potential threat



to their operations, plans, and control over these areas. One of the most effective terrorist tactics in the North was the use of ambushes against government officials and military patrols. In fact, following a rash of early 1970 ambushes, travel during the rainy season became restricted and morale of the populace in the North became extremely low. Many Thai officials moved their residences to the provincial capitals and visited their districts infrequently.

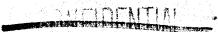
During the wet season (June-Oct 1970) CT tactics shifted from military action to recruiting, organizational activities, and the planting of rice crops. During this lull, however, the communists did carry out sporadic acts of violence in Nan and Chiang Rai which sustained the atmosphere of fear. During the same period, the insurgents initiated clandestine political activities designed to extend their support base in the North and eventually gain local acceptance of their armed presence among the ethnic Thai in certain lowland areas. An estimated 140 armed CTs and their supporters in the Doi Luang mountains developed a new base area with front organizations being used for expansion in the Chiang Saen district of Chiang Rai.

Following the rainy season lull the CT revealed several new dimensions in their operations in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces. CT incidents such as sabotage attempts along the Thoeng/Chiang Khong highway in Chiang Rai during October 1970, although unsuccessful, did suggest a more sophisticated capability to interdict roads. This had severe implications in an area

where it would not be difficult to isolate major cities. In another incident a CT force of 30 to 50 armed insurgents sealed off a complex of Thai villages in the Chiang Muan subdistrict of Chiang Rai, purchased food, and remained overnight. Young Thais who were native to the Chiang Muan area were seen among this CT force, indicating that the CTs had succeeded in bridging the gap between outside cadres and local Thais. In addition the CTs in the Tri-Province area, led by experienced Thai or Sino-Thai cadres, shifted their strategy from organizational expansion to several boldly executed incidents which reflected their confidence in challenging RTG authority on a grander scale.

Despite the serious increase in the insurgent threat in 1969, COIN forces in the Northern region actually decreased slightly. The result was that the insurgents established base areas in several districts where government presence had been eliminated. In mid-1969 the character of COIN operations in the North became one of consolidating RTG base camps with daylight patrols and counterambushes limited to a five kilometer radius of the camps. The impact of this posture was that the insurgents were granted almost uncontested freedom of movement in wide areas to organize, recruit, and consolidate their own positions.

Although the RTG did conduct several significant operations against CT base camps, they generally experienced major problems of coordination and execution which decreased the effectiveness of its COIN efforts against the insurgents. One of the more successful operations was a Police Aerial



Reinforcement Unit (PARU) attack against a 60-man force of insurgents in the Pua district of Nan in May 1969. In addition to killing four insurgents, they captured several pieces of equipment and three weapons.

Another RTG attack occurred in November when the first airmobile COIN assault in Thai military history was conducted against the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) Tri-Province headquarters near Ban Hin-Long Khla. This action was unsuccessful because the headquarters was moved prior to the raid but it did display the government's ability to make an aggressive strike using modern military equipment.

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One of the major problems faced by the RTG in 1969 was an awkward command structure. The Third Army Headquarters (Forward) in Nan, Third Army Headquarters in Phitsanulok, and Joint Headquarters 394 in Lom Sak reported to and received orders directly from RTA Headquarters in Bangkok. RTG operations were further plagued with problems of weak field leadership and coordination, inadequate support from Bangkok, insufficient COIN tactical knowledge, and generally slow and unimaginative responses to a fluid and complex insurgency. Joint Headquarters 394 in Lom Sak was joint in name only, as the Border Patrol Police (BPP) and the Army each operated through their separate local headquarters.

The appointment of Lieutenant General Samran Bhathayakul as commanding general of Third Army in July 1969 gave rise to guarded optimism that greater RTG coordination in that region would be achieved. The assignment of General Samran, the proposed expansion of Accelerated Rural Development



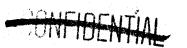
(ARD) into Tak and Lampang provinces, and the use of Thai Special Forces to patrol forward areas and to keep the insurgents off balance marked what officials hoped would be the emergence of a more coherent strategy for the region. In his previous assignment as First Army Area Commander in the Central region, General Samran had been quite effective in addressing the region's insurgency problems by bringing together military, civilian, and police assets. Following General Samran's priorities, security operations in the areas were restricted to a few defensive posts with emphasis on civic action and psychological operations instead of suppression operations.

Prior to the General's assignment to the North, the Third Army Area civic action-psychological operations in the Tri-Province area had drawn sharp criticism from a Phitsanulok newspaper in April and May. The press in the North seldom carried comments critical of COIN operations in the region, and there was reason to believe the criticism represented something more than chance journalistic comment. The articles referred to the RTG policy as one based on the hope that the Meo insurgents would become repentant and surrender, a policy that regarded the Meo as "precious" while actually allowing the insurgents to "one-sidedly" ambush and inflict heavy casualties among Thai soldiers and police. The newspaper plainly argued for a policy of "total suppression" using less restraint and applying greater military force. Many Thai civilians, influenced by ethnic animosities and traditional prejudices against the Meo, saw merit in such an approach. Also, it was clear that the disappointing RTA performance in the North had intensified traditional rivalries and jealousies between the

police and RTA forces. The police, resentful of the general assumption that they were unable to deal with the insurgents and required RTA $\frac{38}{}$ assistance, openly criticized the passive military policies.

Despite these attacks on their program, the RTA forces deployed in the Tri-Province area settled down to the occupation of six base camps. From these bases they engaged in scattered activities such as maintaining road checkpoints, training small numbers of tribesmen, and conducting their own training in the reserve position at Lom Sak. Part of this training program was the Hill Tribes' Volunteer Program (HTV), which was designed to train tribesmen for deployment in 40-man platoons with six to eight RTA personnel assigned to each platoon. The RTA had approximately 2,600 troops in tactical units deployed in the North. Another 1,700 RTA and police were deployed in the Tri-Province area. In the face of the mounting CT strength and influence over segments of the population and territory, the RTG took steps in mid-1970 to contest the CT gains, but these measures were short-term, haphazard, and without any comprehensive or long-term planning.

During a trip to the North in February 1970, the King ordered that the CT be driven out of those areas of Nan province where a "liberated area" had been proclaimed and where intensive efforts had been made to mobilize the population. The initial consequence of this order was an unsuccessful operation in Nan. In April, the RTG sent two understrength companies to sweep the "liberated area." One company encountered a base camp harboring 100-150 insurgents, attacked it and after meeting severe resistance, withdrew under heavy CT fire. This operation, and others, suffered from a



RTG counterinsurgency operations in 1970. It became clear early in the year that if the RTG was to maintain some form of presence in the remote border areas it would require a greater commitment of COIN resources.

During the 1970 rainy season COIN operations in the North were conducted more aggressively than at any time during General Samran's yearlong tenure as Army Area Commander. Third Army organized and trained Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) teams and hunter/capture teams of specially trained hill tribe defectors. Offensive combat patrolling and night patrolling by RTA units were also increased and, coupled with special unit operations, produced a number of contacts and some CT casualties. In 1970 approximately 500 additional RTA personnel were committed to the COIN effort in Nan with the redeployment of the 6th Cavalry Squadron from Lom Sak.

The RTG efforts in the Tri-Province area were similar to those in Nan and Chiang Rai. Small mobile hunter/capture teams composed of hill tribe defectors roamed the insurgent areas. When armed encounters occurred RTA reaction was relatively rapid and effective. In June, a combined Police/RTA force conducted a well-rehearsed and coordinated action employing artillery, mortars, and aircraft in the recovery of two tractors near Ban Pon in Nan. The tractors had been left behind in one of the many ambushes of road crews. This well-coordinated recovery operation indicated an improved capability on the part of the local commanders to conduct effective combat operations. Suppression elements throughout the North



continued their basic reliance on offensive small unit operations and began to emphasize and expand hunter/capture, LRRP, and small unit counterguerrilla training.

The LRRP and HTV teams were relatively successful in the North, particularly in providing intelligence and uncovering small CT bases and training camps. The RTG tactic against these small camps was simple: once a camp had been detected and its location recorded, platoon or company-size operations were conducted in the area. The first successful penetration of a "liberated area" in Nan was conducted in August by a LRRP team and three cavalry companies. This operation netted 14 prisoners and eight CTs killed in action. These rainy season operations added a new element of uncertainty to the CT plans, disrupted their routine, and forced them to divert their attention from recruiting and training to their own security. However, government COIN operations still were generally insufficient to contain the CT expansion in the North.

Undoubtedly the most demoralizing blow to the RTG effort in the North was the September 1970 ambush in the Chiang Saen district of Chiang Rai in which the provincial governor, chief of police, and Third Army assistant G-2 were killed while attempting to secure the defection of two communist leaders. Since his arrival in Chiang Rai five months prior to the ambush the governor had been particularly innovative in dealing with a number of COIN problems and had given a boost to the morale of local and provincial officials.



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Hoping to clarify command and control in the Northern region, Third Army Headquarters (Forward) in Nan and J-394 Headquarters in Lom Sak were disbanded in late 1970, and Communist Suppression Operations Region (CSOR), III Tactical Operations Center, was established at Phitsanulok. Local regimental commanders assumed responsibility in their respective tactical areas on 1 December, and the Tactical Operations Center composed of Third Army, the Direct Air Support Center, the police, and the civilian authorities became operational 29 December.

The RTG employed small units to a greater extent than ever before against insurgent base camp areas in both the Tri-Provinces and the far North in late 1970. In the former, operating out of two company-sized base camps established in October, RTG forces focused their operations on the CTs who were most active in the mountains south of the Phitsanulok/ Lom Sak highway in the Lom Sak and Muang districts of Phetchabun province. Operations ranging from small unit to company-size were also launched against CT bases in Northern Nan and in the Thoeng and Chiang Khong districts of eastern Chiang Rai. These operations demonstrated improved planning and coordination, greater aggressiveness on the part of small units, and improved use of support elements such as tactical air, artillery, and helicopter airlift. These operations accomplished their primary mission of disrupting CT dry season plans, but CT capabilities in the North, nurtured and consolidated by more than three years of virtually no RTG opposition, were still formidable. In summary, RTG suppression forces had made only a minor dent in the insurgent strength and support in the



North, but their operations showed promise for the future.

Hill Tribesmen of the North

Exploitation of the Meo hill tribesmen was an integral part of the basic CT strategy in creating secure bases in the North. In 1969 some 900 insurgents concentrated their major recruiting efforts among the Meo hill $\frac{46}{}$ tribes. These efforts were made easier by the RTG attitude toward the problems of this minority group and by its overreaction to insurgent activities. During 1969 these Meo recruits received insurgency training across the border in Laos, but during the 1970 rainy season the tribesmen began receiving weapons training and indoctrination in-country, possibly as a replacement for the training conducted in Laos in previous years. Also, the in-country training served as a measure of the secure presence which the insurgents felt they had established in the Northern region.

Captured CTs and defectors reported that the majority of the Meo joined the CT because of some dissatisfaction with the government such as land tenure or the RTG policy forbidding the hill tribes' practice of "slash-and-burn." The land tenure problem involved a great many CT supporters in the foothills where they had their strongholds and could work on the people, reminding them of the government's lack of interest or action in correcting the problem.* The insurgents accused the government of ignoring the problem. This may have been true in part, but the problem

^{*}In areas where the tribesmen had been permanently resettled they were never given clear title to the land.

existed in an area where there was little government presence and the CT would not allow the RTG forces access. The RTG disrupted the entire way of life of the Meo in the North by outlawing "slash-and-burn" farming, the only farming technique known to the tribesmen.* Realizing the difficulties experienced by the Meo in attempting to change their way of farming, the RTG started resettlement villages, usually in the valley, where the tribesmen could farm like regular Thai farmers. Of course many of the Meo had no desire to change farming practices or move to the valley; therefore, they believed they could strike back at the government by joining the CT. While RTG troops were attempting to move these hill tribesmen to relocation camps, the communist terrorist "Liberation Forces" claimed that all Meos who had evacuated according to government orders were being arrested, that the elderly men were being executed, the young men were being placed in labor camps, and the women were being used for "indescriminate sexual intercourse with Americans." With the attitude of the Meo and considerable CT propaganda attacks, the RTG failed to persuade the Meo tribesmen to leave the mountains and settle in government resettlement centers.

Propaganda was used skillfully by the insurgents in other ways. For example, their "Voice of the People of Thailand" (VOPT) announced in December 1969 that a village in the Pua district of Nan province had been "liberated." The broadcast asserted that a particular village's defense volunteers had defected to the communists, that the people from the

^{*}For years it had been customary to chop down the trees, burn the area off, farm it for two or three years, then move to another area and start the "slash-and-burn" process again.



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surrounding villages were "flocking" to that village, and that the "People's Liberation" soldiers were helping the villagers set up a revolutionary state power. Subsequent broadcasts from VOPT and Radio Peking stated that other villages were being liberated, as had a "concentration camp" in Nan province. This last reference was to a hill tribe's resettlement camp.

These broadcasts effectively downgraded the RTG civic action program among the Meo tribesmen and were contributing factors in the failure of the resettlement program. Despite the failure of the resettlement program and criticism of its handling of the tribesmen, the RTG continued its civic action and psychological operations in the North but began to place more emphasis on military operations. Deployment of a most unusual RTG COIN force, the Chinese Irregular Force (CIF) into the Chiang Rai area in December 1970 proved the value of well-organized operations and was one of the better planned and coordinated COIN efforts during the year.

Chinese Irregular Force in the North

The CIF, used for the first time in operations against the CT in the Chiang Rai areas, was a remnant of the 93rd Division of the Nationalist Chinese Army which fled China in 1949 following the Chinese Communist take- $\frac{50}{}$ Members of the division originally settled in northern Burma across the border from Yunnan province. There they regrouped and received reinforcements for counterattacks on the communists in Yunnan.

Alarmed by the hostile activities launched from their territory against China and concerned for Burma's declared neutrality, the Burmese



launched military operations against the Chinese Nationalists. During 1953-54, under the supervision of the United Nations, 3,500 Nationalist Chinese troops were evacuated to Taiwan. In 1961 the Burmese launched a new offensive and further evacuations took place, after which the Republic of China declined responsibility for those Chinese who refused evacuation.

As late as 1971 it was estimated that from 5,000 to 6,000 Chinese troops were living in the areas where Burma, Laos, and Thailand meet, with an estimated 3,000 in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces of Thailand. These forces had retained their military formations and called themselves the Third Army under General Lee Wun-Huan and the Fifth Army under General Hsi-Wan. Because of their involvement with the opium trade in Burma, Laos, and Thailand, they were dubbed the "opium army." Consequently, Thai parliament members from Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai complained to the government about the Chinese opium farming and urged the use of RTA troops against the Chinese. This was rejected, however, in favor of using the Chinese troops to curb the insurgency in the North.

Supreme Command Headquarters (Forward) in Bangkok, realized the potential value of this "standing army" and successfully negotiated their support in combating the CT insurgency. In exchange, the RTG promised that CIF members would be granted status as refugees and would be moved into the hills of Chiang Rai to settle there and act as a barrier against communist infiltration from Laos into Thailand. The RTG also hoped that with their new status as refugees the Chinese would give up the opium trade and become

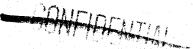




model farmers, growing coffee, tea, or wheat instead of opium.

Negotiations for the use of the CIF in the North took place between General Lee, CIF Third Army commander; General Hsi-wan, Fifth Army commander; and Lt. Gen. Kriengsak Chomanan, Deputy, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Command (Forward). Training of the CIF began in September 1970 and, after several months of preparation, units were moved to staging areas in Chiang Mai province and later trucked to assembly areas in Chiang Rai. From there 250 CIF were transported into the vicinity of Chiang Khong to start operation in the Doi Luang area while another 500 men moved to the Doi Yao area. The operations actually began December 10, and the CIF in the Doi Luang area were successful in routing the CT, some of whom, crossed the border into Laos. As a result the CT area headquarters which commanded the Doi Luang area was moved south into the Muang district of Chiang Rai. Casualties on both sides in the Doi Luang encounter were initially listed as heavy, although the CIF suffered only 14 killed and 17 wounded.

The CT base camp uncovered by the CIF in the Doi Yao mountains contained a weapons repair facility, an area headquarters with mimeograph printing equipment, along with numerous documents and photographs. Collocated with the camp was a supply cache containing approximately \$15,000 worth of medical supplies of Thai, American, Japanese, and CHICOM origin; 400 uniforms; numerous AK-47s and carbines; as well as Mao Tse-Tung badges and handbooks. Large quantities of explosives and demolitions equipment—including one Soviet model nonmetallic antipersonnel mine—were also uncovered.



Most of the CIF casualties in the Doi Yao areas were caused by booby traps or mines. The Soviet antipersonnel mine previously mentioned was used successfully against the CIF and had been used earlier against the RTA in Nan and Chiang Rai. Made of fibre glass and with no metal fragments, its destructiveness resulted primarily from concussion and the mine caused most of the RTG and CIF casualties to suffer either one or both feet being blown off just above the ankle. Because of its nonmetallic nature, the mine was difficult to detect. Captured documents indicated that the CT resources and organization in the area were considerably more extensive than anticipated. Specifically, the documents found during the CIF operation revealed that the CT had been issued two B-40 rocket launchers and some light machine guns. However, it was thought that the limited quantity indicated they were for training purposes rather than for use in fighting. Also, these documents revealed that the Chinese Communists had a great deal of influence in shaping Thai insurgency and were providing supplies, money, and propaganda materials.

In reaction to the CIF operation in the Doi Luang area the CT evacuated their base camps and moved into the border areas to regroup and receive 55/reinforcements. They planned to resume their own attacks in January 1971.

As a result of the successful use of the CIF, the RTG asked General Lee and General Hsi-wan each to train an additional battalion for use in COIN operations in early 1971. General Lee immediately called 300 of his men back from Burma and started training in Chiang Mai in late December. General Hsi-wan also agreed to form an additional battalion for use by the RTG.

CHAPTER IV

NORTHEAST REGION

In the Northeast, the terrorists maintained considerable strength despite nearly two years of RTG military pressure and economic progress. As in other regions of Thailand the communist influence was strongest in the remote districts where the RTG presence was limited.

In an apparent attempt to revitalize the insurgent image early in 1969, a CT propaganda broadcast announced the formation of the Supreme Command of the Thai Peoples' Liberation Armed Forces (TPLAF). The establishment of the TPLAF was substantiated by the appearance of uniformed insurgents in the Northeast. The insurgents consisted primarily of Vietnamese refugees and Thai/Laos ethnic groups. This group of approximately 1400 CTs began 1969 with long-range goals of eliminating U.S. presence, overthrowing the RTG, and establishing a communist structure. Their immediate and more realistic goals consisted of stemming the flow of defectors, recruiting on a more selective basis, and maintaining pressure $\frac{58}{58}$ on the RTG.

It was in the Northeast region that the majority of the communist infiltration from North Vietnam and Laos occurred. This out-of-country support of the Thai insurgency was a difficult problem for the RTG because all points on the Mekong River, the natural border between Thailand and Laos, could not be watched at all times. Nakhon Phanom province was the center of most activity as the insurgents attempted to improve lines



of communication and supply links from Laos and among their regional commanders. Although there were no notable increases in the number of infiltrations in 1969 and 1970, it was during this time that many of the political and military cadres which had undergone three to four years of intensive training in North Vietnam, China, and Laos began to return. Many of those in the cadres had served with the Pathet Lao and had previous guerrilla warfare experience.

During the first quarter of 1969, incidents in the Northeast averaged 30 per month, most of them RTG initiated. Also, during this period there seemed to be a change in insurgent policy, probably resulting from the CPT leadership meeting in December 1968. The policy changes included plans for a reduction of armed encounters, a rise in acts of terrorism, and a vast propaganda effort. In April 1969 the Northeast experienced 61 incidents, the high for that year. In May the number of incidents decreased to 38, but 25 of these and most of the incidents in April resulted from RTG suppression operations in the Nakhom Phanom area, with the Na Kae district being the most active. A clash in May with an estimated 50 insurgents was the exception to this pattern of contact between small, five- to ten-member units.

Other than a major recruiting effort in Ubon province, the CTs returned to a low profile campaign in August 1969, concentrating on developing their infrastructure while generally avoiding government troops. The CT efforts to build jungle support bases as well as village infrastructures



were more intense and sophisticated than in previous years. When armed conflicts did occur, the CTs were more successful than formerly, having been reinforced by personnel returning from out-of-country training with some automatic weapons and working from expanded support bases. Reports suggested that the CTs started an expansion program in mid-1969 into remote areas of the region, particularly in northwest Kalasin and southeast Ubon provinces. Also, there was low-level insurgent activity in Roi Et and Khon Kaen provinces.

In late 1969 the CT started to recover from the setbacks suffered during 1967 and 1968. This was manifested in the increase in CT activities in October, November, and December when VPU and Joint Security Team (JST) forces first came under harassment in the Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom. These attacks against the VPU continued into the first months of 1970 until the onset of the rainy season brought major activity to a halt.

It was at this time that the leadership of the Communist Party of
Thailand ordered a change to a more aggressive profile in building the CT
village support base among the population. Previously, the CT had attempted
to "woo" the villagers through promises of a better life, money, tractors,
etc., but in early 1970, they began a campaign of terrorism and intimidation.

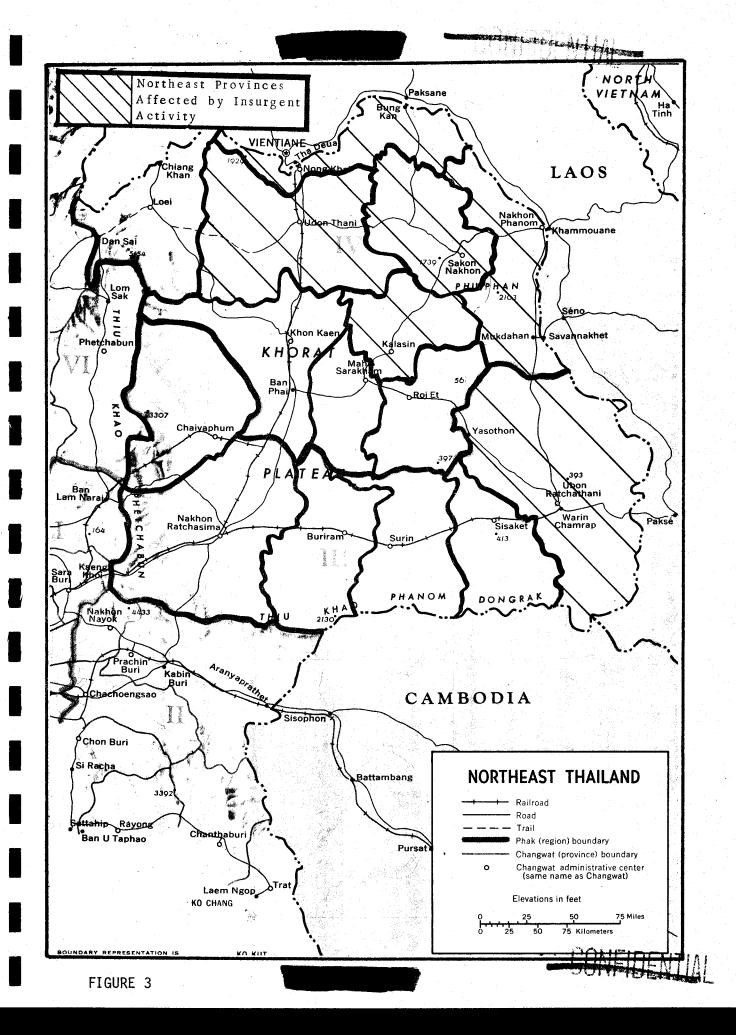
Following the plan of action adopted at the regional CT meeting in January 1970, violence accelerated in two priority target areas of Na Kae and Sawang Daen Din districts of Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon. The CTs also decided to strengthen their control over areas where they had been

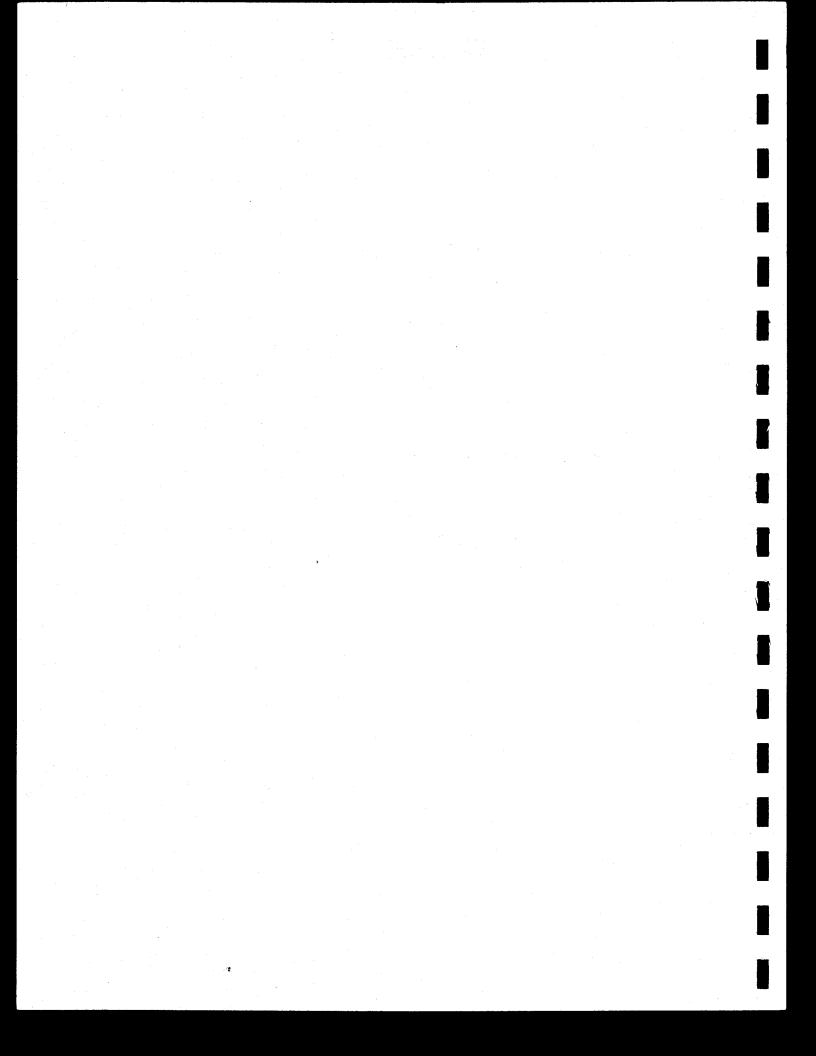


active for years by augmenting their support base, improving the quality of the individual insurgents, and expanding their links between active insurgent areas in the Northeast and in Laos. In Na Kae district, for example, there was a significant and alarming strengthening of the CTs' village support base, and the CTs were better armed, supported, disciplined, and motivated than they had been in past years.

CTs in the Northeast first exploded command-detonated mines in a road ambush in Na Kae in late February 1970. A similar ambush in May cost the RTA six killed and three wounded, and a third reported use of a command-detonated device occured in June, with three RTG personnel wounded. Also in the Na Kae area there was a CT effort to prevent the development of a successful RTG village security program by discrediting Village Defense Corps (VDC) personnel in the eyes of the villagers and by demoralizing village defenders through constant harassment and assassination.

In priority areas, the insurgents contested the government presence in the villages and the government's efforts to extend this presence through the VDC and Village Security and Development Unit (VSDU) programs. In July 1970, all insurgent-initiated military actions were directed against village security personnel. During this same period, the communists worked on the establishment of their own Village Military Units (VMU) and the recruitment of village cadres in hard-core areas such as Na Kae. Forty-two VMUs were reported in 25 Na Kae villages, and 58 more were being developed by late 1970. These units were to provide a means of expanding insurgent control of the villages, thus freeing local military forces and regular





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jungle forces to concentrate on operations over a wider geographical area.

The VMUs came under the command of the village committees of the Communist Party of Thailand, and where there were no village committees, they came under the command of the local TPLAF. Working closely with communist supporters in the villages, the VMUs improved the CT relationship with the villagers in many ways. They assassinated unpopular officials, assisted other villagers with their crops, provided materials and labor to build houses, distributed medicines, and discussed individual and community problems. In addition, they improved rapport between the villagers and the jungle soldiers and obtained respect and support for the insurgents among the villagers.

While the VMUs were only in limited areas of the Northeast, the application of their organizational techniques to other areas offered the potential of denying RTG influence and control. Similar organizing efforts were underway in Sakon Nakhon province near Phusung and further north in Sawang Daen Din district. In the latter, insurgent leaders, reinforced by an experienced cadre from Na Kae, had established VMUs in at least ten villages. The relative isolation and lack of RTG presence, coupled with this concentration of insurgent presence and efforts, provided the CT with an excellent potential for spreading insurgency at the village level.

Intelligence sources revealed the existence of a strong insurgent base area in Tambon Dong Luang, a narrow east-west valley in the Phu Phan hills of Nakhon Phanom. Although it had not been declared a "liberated area," and could be entered at will by RTA forces, it was sufficiently

under the control of CT units for them to establish a permanent provincial headquarters and a school complex there. Storage areas were constructed and a small weapons repair facility and armory were functioning in Dong Luang, making it possible for the CT to accumulate weapons and supplies for future operations.

Another area of expansion in the Northeast was in Ubon, where insurgents, operating from bases in Laos and supported by Pathet Lao/North Vietnamese elements, sought to expand into Thai border territory adjacent to Laos and Cambodia. It was reported in late 1968 that an out-of-country Thai jungle training school had been moved from Hoa Binh, near Hanoi, to a site in southern Laos, a few miles north of the Cambodian border. While situated in a rather isolated area, the camp was just 20 miles from the Thai border and approximately 85 miles from Ubon RTAFB, requiring a much shorter trip for Thai recruits than the trip to Hoa Binh which sometimes took months.

The growing concern among Ubon regional RTG officials was underlined by the buildup of six NVA and Pathet Lao battalions in nearby Champhassak and Sithadone provinces across the Mekong in Laos. Under CT plans for expansion, major recruiting effort took place in Ubon province in 1969, and in 1970 several Ubon provincial officials became concerned over the situation, believing it to be a new and concerted effort by the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese to infiltrate Ubon province.



The RTG showed some improvement in countering the CT threat in the Northeast as it slowly upgraded the quality of its middle-level provincial and military leadership. However, the shortage of able and well-trained low-level government officials continued to hamper the COIN effort in 1969. With RTG attention and energies preempted by external threats of NVA activities in Laos and Cambodia in 1970, there was still no meaningful resistance, much less a response, to communist inroads in the Northeast.

As the communist forces in Laos achieved greater success and drove closer to the Mekong River in 1970, the RTG reacted to fears of increased infiltration by authorizing the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) to institute a Mekong River Patrol. The Border Patrol Police (BPP) had previously maintained such a patrol and continued to do so; however, they were augmented in August 1970 by a squadron of small boats from Sattahip, near U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield, and the RTN thereafter assumed an increased role, resisting $\frac{70}{}$ infiltration.

The command and control group of the RTN river patrol moved to Nakhon Phanom in July 1970 to establish liaison with various other RTG agencies involved in COIN. Patrols commenced on 5 August with two boats on 24-hour patrols ranging 60 kilometers south of Nakhon Phanom (NKP) and two small $\frac{71}{1000}$ long-tailed boats patrolling north of NKP approximately 15 kilometers. Future plans called for the RTG to increase naval strength on the Mekong by another 15 boats which were to be larger and faster than those presently deployed.



Despite the early onset of the rains in May 1970, which in previous years triggered a government standdown, RTG forces maintained pressure on the CTs in the region with small unit operations, more aggressive patrolling by the 3rd battalion and 6th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in Na Kae, and an operation by a composite Task Force Singha II.

Operation Singha II, conducted in May 1970, utilized 170 men from RTA, police, VDC, and Thai Special Forces in 15-man teams which struck 12 suspected CT locations. The technique employed was to strike four locations simultaneously with one team each, search the area for three to five days, then withdraw the teams for a rest and insert four fresh teams to strike four more locations. This operation effectively exploited intelligence, was well-planned, and aggressively executed. Difficulties with the VDC, however, revealed that this COIN force in the Northeast was not as well-trained or organized as was previously thought.

Another new operation dispalyed the expanding RTA concept of COIN in the Northeast. After a gradual turnover, local security roles were given to the police and para-military forces, and the RTA was reconstructed into larger forces which could play an aggressive mobile strike role against CT sanctuaries and large CT bands. If CT activity intensified in an area and it appeared that the village security forces or the local police were not able to cope with the problem, RTA units would be dispatched to the area. These tactics met with considerable success; however, in most cases the CT sought to avoid contact with Army units because such encounters



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usually proved too costly to the terrorist.

In general, though, out-of-country threats diverted RTA attention and resources from COIN efforts to border defenses. This resulted in a considerable decrease in pressure on the insurgents, particularly in Nakhon Phanom province. For example, the 3rd battalion of the 6th RCT was deployed to Ubon while the rest of the 6th RCT was placed on alert for out-of-country deployment. These forces were replaced by only one company.

The 3rd battalion had been a highly effective unit in fighting insurgency. In less than four months in Na Kae district from March to June 1970, the battalion conducted more operations and killed more CTs (21 confirmed) than any battalion previously had accomplished in a year. The battalion's deployment back from the border area resulted in a considerable decrease in pressure on the insurgents, particularly in Nakhon Phanom province, at a time when CT efforts were increasing. The CTs were again permitted to pursue their limited organizational objectives with little interference by security forces.

<u>Vietnamese Refugees</u>

In addition to direct insurgency in the Northeast, the RTG was faced with another problem of equal importance—the Vietnamese refugees living in Thailand. Most had arrived from what became North Vietnam and caused many Thais to question their political sympathies. In reality, few pro-Hanoi sentiments were expressed because the refugees were into their second generation in Thailand and many of them considered Thailand their



home and had no desire to return to North Vietnam. Surveys among the Vietnamese refugees indicated they sought repatriation to Vietnam but such surveys were discounted. Within the community there was a command and control structure of the Communist Lao Dong, or "Worker Party of North Vietnam." The Lao Dong answered for or intimidated the refugees when surveys were administered so that they answered "yes," when actually other indicators showed they had no desire for repatriation.

The actual number of those in the Lao Dong cadre in the Northeast area was difficult to determine, but Military Assistance Command, Thailand (MACTHAI) intelligence files indicated approximately 200. By 1970, men in the cadre were quite old--being in their 60s and 70s. Others had been repatriated, and some had changed their allegiance or were no longer active. Younger men were also in the cadre; they had arrived from Vietnam only 20 years ago. In 1970 this younger group was becoming the mainspring of the Lao Dong party in the Northeast.

As a solution to the problem of refugees supporting insurgency in the Northeast it was suggested that the government work to detect and deport hard-core communist refugees while allowing the remainder of the Viernamese to be gradually assimilated into Thai society. Although no continuing arrangement existed to return refugees, in 1968 the RTG deported to South Vietnam approximately 100 Vietnamese who had been arrested and accused of communist activity or of being oriented toward Hanoi. This action caused a considerable furor in North Vietnam and among the refugees and was marked



by demonstrations and petitions to the local Thai province governors. The government turned a deaf ear to the protests and thereafter the Lao Dong leadership ordered the Vietnamese refugees to assume a low profile, to make friends with Thai officials, and not to become involved in disputes for $\frac{79}{100}$ fear that others would be sent to South Vietnam.

To further reduce the possibility of deportation in great numbers, it was believed that in February 1969 Hanoi instructed the Vietnamese community to curtail overt political activities that might provoke RTG countermeasures and to firmly establish themselves in the Thai economy. They were also instructed to intensify their love of communism, withdraw their children from Thai schools, and substitute Vietnamese education—although such schools were illegal. No internal contradiction was apparent in Hanoi's instructions since Hanoi intended for the Vietnamese communities to remain in Thailand indefinitely. On the other hand, the Thai government favored removing the Vietnamese refugees because they constituted an unwelcome group of potential insurgents and dissidents.

Hoping to rid themselves of the refugees, representatives from the CSOD traveled to South Vietnam in early 1970 to discuss the repatriation issue with officials there. CSOD felt that removal of the hard-core communists would make it easier for the RTG to cope with the remainder of the refugees. While in South Vietnam, CSOD filmed interviews with previously repatriated Vietnamese refugees for viewing on Thai television. Through these documentaries CSOD sought to show that the deportees had not been



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maltreated, as was charged by those voices in Thailand sympathetic to Hanoi.

Thus CSOD attempted to convince the remaining refugees in Thailand of the RTG's good intentions.

The RTG's attitude toward accepting the Vietnamese was influenced by the fact the refugees had been in Thailand for almost 20 years and had been partially assimilated into the Thai/Lao population of the Northeast. The language and cultural differences were being overcome through education and daily contact, and more Vietnamese spoke Thai than their native language. Another factor was that many of the Vietnamese owned businesses, owned land, had married into Thai or Lao families, and no longer had ties with North Vietnam. In fact, the second generation of Vietnamese were beginning to think of themselves as Thais.

Over the years there were some cases where Vietnamese were excluded from the Thai educational system because of Thai animosity toward the Vietnamese, whom they considered intruders. In some locations lack of school facilities caused Thais to resent the additional burden of refugee children. As a result, some Vietnamese established their own schools. This was illegal under Thai law, but in many areas the law was not enforced or clandestine schools were held in villages, homes, and shops, where the children could acquire an education and also retain or learn the Vietnamese $\frac{83}{1}$ language.

Many of these schools were raided and closed and the teachers imprisoned or forced to abandon the effort. A large number, however, did continue to

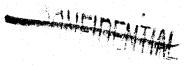


operate and flourish quite openly. In Udorn, for example, there were a number of small schools in operation that had very elaborate systems to provide warning of approaching police. By 1970, the need for these schools seemed to have decreased as the Vietnamese community gained money and affluence and their children were more readily accepted in Thai schools. Nevertheless, in some of the more remote and backward areas where facilities remained limited, the Vietnamese continued to be excluded from the Thai educational system.

Although deportation of all or part of the community was still an RTG objective, experience had shown that the government probably could not achieve such goals and had, in fact, helped improve the condition of the Vietnamese refugees. In propaganda meetings in North Vietnam, the communists reported to their followers that the lenient moves by the Bangkok government were forced on them by the Americans, who realized that they were losing the war in Vietnam and were seeking accommodations with North Vietnam.

Ubon Sapper Attacks

The question of U.S. Air Base security in Thailand had always brought replies ranging from "the insurgents would never chance it" to "the insurgents could hit any base at any time." Although the communist terrorists had not sought a direct confrontation with American forces in Thailand, they had kept the U.S. aware of this possibility by occasional strikes at American-tenanted air bases.



In July 1969 the CT attacked Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Bast (RTAFB) with a sapper team. The attack was well-planned and executed and the sappers $\frac{85}{}$ damaged several aircraft before retreating safely. In January 1970 the CT attempted a second sapper attack on Ubon but this time were repulsed at the perimeter. The attack failed mainly because villagers in the vicinity of Ubon reported seeing strangers wearing black uniforms and carrying $\frac{86}{}$ weapons.

Preparation for the July attack on Ubon may have begun as early as November 1968 when informants advised that weapons and explosives were being transported by communists into Ubon from Laos. Informants also provided several names of key individuals with authority to order an attack against $\frac{87}{}$ Ubon. Shortly after this information was received the Pathet Lao in Champassak province, Laos began recruiting Thai villagers from the Ubon area for sapper training at their camp across the river in Laos.

Then, on 28 July 1969, a sentry observed three unidentified persons on the southwest perimeter of Ubon RTAFB. The sentry received a number of rounds of small arms fire from at least two weapons, one of which was believed to have been automatic. The sentry and his dog were both wounded and the sapper team escaped through the perimeter fence. Minutes later, the first of five plastic charges detonated in the wheel well of a C-47. A second charge damaged a ground control approach unit. The third charge detonated in the wheel well of a second C-47; it was followed by two other explosions near the runway. These last explosions did not result in any



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property or equipment damage. Five more unexploded charges were later $\frac{88}{}$ found near the runway.

The CTs were less successful in their 13 January 1970 attack on Ubon. In fact five sappers were killed inside the perimeter. Although the CT had entered the base Ubon security forces were prepared and on alert status in anticipation of the sabotage attempt. The security police had been alerted to the possibility of an attack approximately four hours prior to the attack when a villager reported seeing ten strangers dressed in dark uniforms and carrying what appeared to be weapons. Although the sapper team managed to penetrate the perimeter, they were detected before they could reach their targets. In addition to killing five of the intruders the security forces captured four Czech 7.65mm machine pistols and numerous satchel charges, hand grenades, knives, wire cutters, and loaded ammunition clips. The probability of any future attack on U.S. resources was summed up in the 5 February 1970 OSI Local Base Threat Estimate:

In light of the failure of the last sapper attack against Ubon, it seems logical that the communists will consider a "stand-off" attack using rockets or mortars. . . . The decision to commit forces against USAF bases in Thailand remains essentially a political one which would include, either singularly or jointly, the CPT, North Vietnam or the Pathet Lao leadership. The most likely targets would be USAF aircraft and facilities at Ubon, Udorn, or Nakhon Phanom.



CHAPTER V

CENTRAL REGION*

The CTs in the Central region maintained a lower profile during 1969-1970 than they did in the other regions. When compared with the number of monthly incidents in the North and Northeast, and the activities of the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) in the south, the 22 incidents that occurred in the Central regions during all of 1970 90/reflected considerably less activity than in the other regions.

Incidents in the Central region were primarily of an organizational nature, along with information collection and selective assassination of village officials. There were, however, a few CT-initiated military incidents in Ratburi and one in Kanchanaburi.

There appeared to be several reasons for the low profile of the CT in the Central region. One was that CT's organization in the region suffered due to a lack of central committee emphasis on organizational activities. Another was that the people of the region were more prosperous and therefore less susceptible to communist persuasion. The people were also ethnic Thai with a longer historical and cultural association with the King and with Thailand as a nation. Paramount to the CT's consideration, however, was an awareness of the proximity of the Central region to Bangkok. The CT felt that if they were to increase

*Material for this chapter is based upon an interview with Capt James E. Dowling, 23 March 1971.



the level of activity as in other regions, the central government, fearing $\frac{91}{}$ for its own security, would intensify its COIN efforts.

The RTG had two platoons of the RTA, approximately 45 men each, committed to COIN in the region. They were located in the mountains of Phet Buri and Prachuap Khiri Khan provinces along the Burma border. These provinces were south of and adjoined Rat Buri province, where the largest CT organization in the central region was located. The CTs initially formed in the mountains where they were relatively safe from RTG forces, and when CT-initiated military actions did occur, they were usually perpetrated by the Rat Buri group.

In the north portion of the region, around Lop Buri and Ayutthaya provinces, bandits had caused the RTG more problems than the CTs. Police raids had uncovered caches of weapons which included M-16s and AK-47s, but it was felt that these weapons belonged to bandit organizations rather than to the CTs because no concrete evidence of a CT organization in this area had thus far been found.

The CTs in Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat) and Buriram provinces, with the assistance of CT groups in Prachin Buri province, operated with an advantage gained from a government handicap. Because Nakhon Ratchasima and Buriram were in the Second Army Area and Prachin Buri was in the First Army Area they were separate regional and political entities and fell within separate Communist Suppression Operation Regions (CSORs). The CTs discovered that when pursued by a Second Army Area operation



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in Nakhon Ratchasima or Buriram provinces they could retreat southward into the mountains of Prachin Buri province out of the Second Army's jurisdiction.

Prachin Buri province had a small indigenous CT organization in 1970 estimated at 10 to 25 personnel. These local people conducted recruiting and propaganda meetings and maintained food caches for the CTs operating down from the two provinces to the north. Due to the lack of RTG coordination and cooperation between the suppression units in Nakhon Ratchasima and Buriram and those of Prachin Buri provinces, parts of Prachin Buri developed into safe havens with several base camps and rest areas that were used by the CT groups from the north.

South of Prachin Buri, in Chanthaburi province, the RTG operated Communist Suppression Operations Center (CSOC) 61, a Thai Marine head-quarters operating civic action and medical teams along the Cambodian border. This represented the only notable COIN activity in the region. These teams produced a good image for the RTG among the people on the border and also maintained a watch along the border by gathering intelligence.

The RTG response to subversion in the Central region was unaggressive.

In addition to the two platoons of the RTA in Phet Buri and Prachuap Khiri

Khan provinces there were other RTA troop concentrations in and around Bangkok but these were not committed to COIN. The RTG COIN effort in the Central



region was thus negligible at a time when a concerted RTG intelligence effort, infiltration of the CT system, and identification and elimination of the CT leaders could have, in the view of one intelligence analyst, effectively put an end to CT activity in the Central region.

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CHAPTER VI

SOUTHERN REGION

The Southern region begins with Chumphon province and extends southward to the Malaysia border. For discussion purposes, this region is divided into the midsouth and the far-south, with the five southernmost provinces comprising the far-south.

In late 1969 the Southern region showed a rise in insurgent incidents especially in the form of ambushes. Specifically in the far-south, along the Malaysia border, insurgent incidents for 1969 doubled the previous year's figures despite martial law, curfews, and increased government COIN efforts. The CT gains continued in the midsouth during 1970 especially in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, and Surat Thani provinces where the CTs strengthened their influence over the villagers.

Two significant trends in the midsouth were the CT's growing hold on the two northern districts of Phattalung province and their capacity to accelerate the rate of violent acts, particularly in the Ban Nasan district of Surat Thani and the Chawang district of Nakhon Si Thammarat. In Phattalung serious security problems developed in 1969 and became more serious in 1970. There the CTs sought, through terrorism and harassment of RTG officials, to consolidate their control over the area, and they effectively used assassination as a means of helping achieve their goals.

Aware of the relative inability of the RTG to protect the villages in Phattalung, local residents were caught in the dilemma of supporting the



RTG in the area or cooperating with the CT. As CT viability increased, the villagers became more reluctant to identify or work with RTG officials or participate in government functions. Some officials became afraid to travel in many parts of the province, a situation which aided in the $\frac{94}{4}$ accomplishment of the CT objective of neutralizing the RTG effort.

In Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat relatively large insurgent units were located in the southwest border regions of these two provinces. Another concentration of CTs were along the mountain range on the border between Trang and Phattalung with most of their activity taking place in $\frac{95}{}$ Phattalung and northwest Songkhla.

A pattern similar to the deteriorating situation in Phattalung also emerged in Ban Na San district of Surat Thani and Chawang district of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The insurgents in this area attacked and burned a Joint Suppression Team (JST) position in July 1969, killing one policeman, wounding another, and capturing six weapons and a radio. RTG security posts in Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Phattalung experienced attacks from 15-30 man groups. Among the more notable CT actions were an October 1970 attack on a Mobile Development Unit, the burning of a village security post in Surat Thani, and an attack in late December on a Village Protection Unit (VPU) in the Cha Uat district of Nakhon Si Thammarat. In the Cha Uat attack, 10 of the 22 village defenders were wounded and all survivors were captured. The VPU members were later released after surrendering their weapons and undergoing an

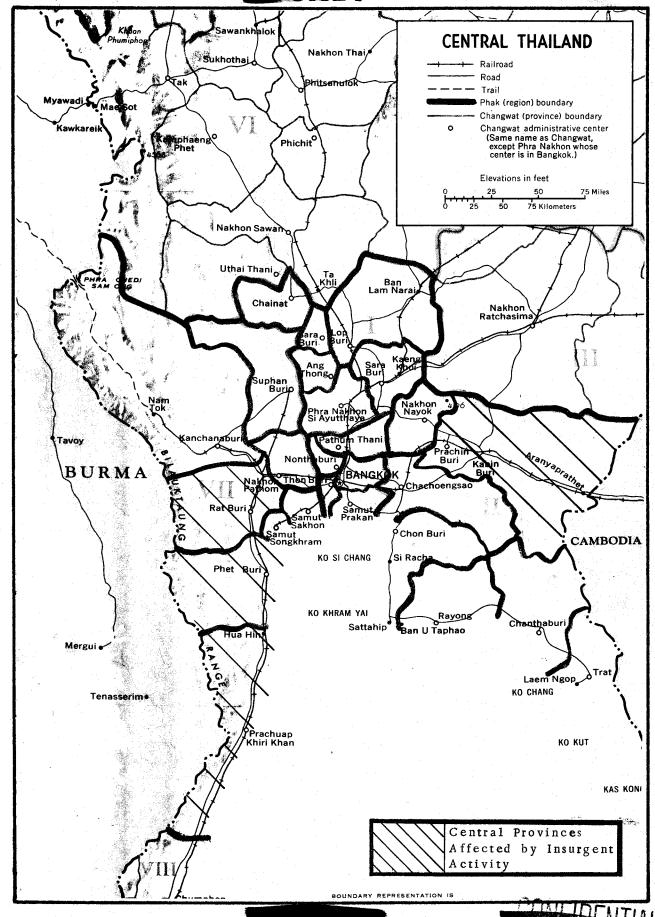
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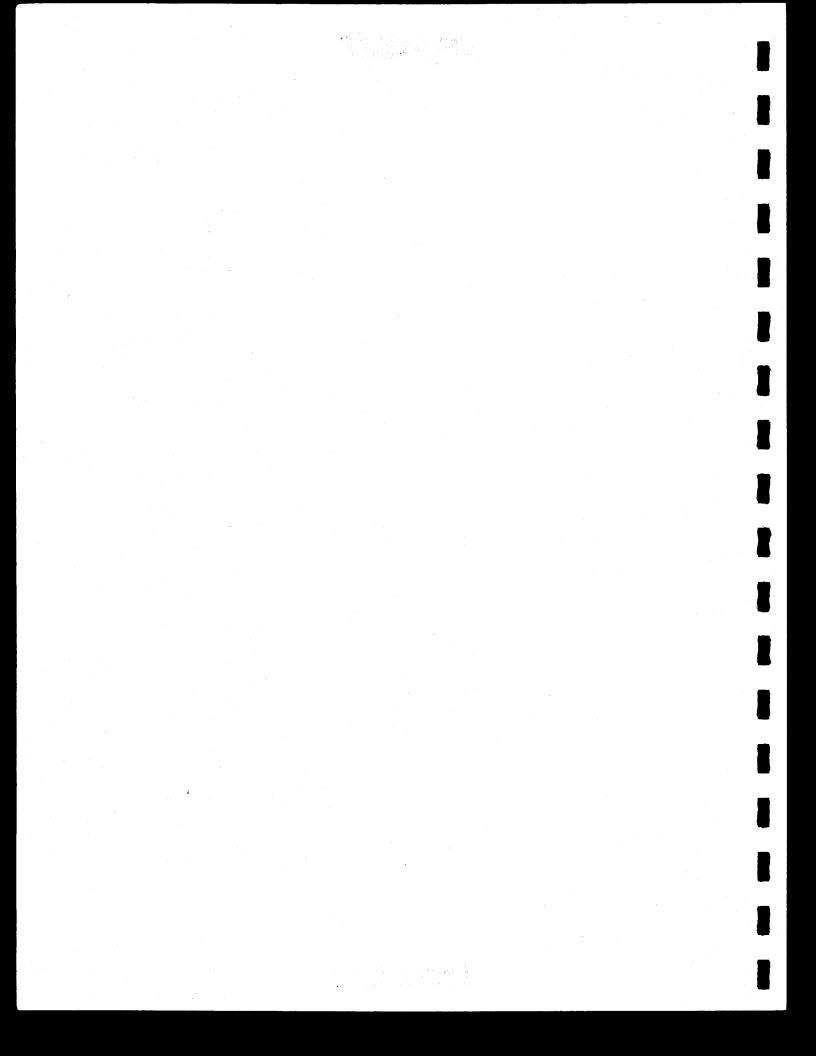
hour-long propaganda session. Rather than evading suppression forces as they had in the past, CT military action was showing some new facets in 1970 as the CTs resisted and retaliated against RTG incursions into CT base areas in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

In January 1970, CSOD region 4 in the midsouth and CSOD region 5 in the far-south were combined into one region, CSOR 4, with two subordinate headquarters designated CSOR 4/1 in the far-south and 4/2 in the northern $\frac{98}{}$ portion of the region. This effort to centralize command and control reflected growing RTG concern for the insurgent threat in the South. In the far-south, CSOR 4/1 coordinated operations and made some progress against Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) base camps. The CTO, the action arm of the Communist Party of Malaysia, responded to the threat to its sanctuaries by harassing RTG forces.

In May 1970, RTA forces clashed with CTO elements in the Waeng district of Narathiwat province. This represented the first engagement in the farsouth between RTA troops and the CTO. Usually, the CTO in this area had been engaged by the joint Thai/Malaysian border patrol. In sharp contrast to the initiatives by RTG forces in the spring, disagreement between Thai and Malaysian authorities developed later in the year concerning methods of dealing with the CTO insurgency. The Thais resisted Malaysian Army overtures for a larger Malaysian security force in combined operations on the Thai side of the border. With higher priorities placed on security problems in other regions, the RTG was unwilling to undertake or authorize operations against the CTO which would incite them into direct action







against the Thai government. The RTG's first concern was the CTs in the midsouth, and secondly, the Muslim separatists in the far-south.

The separatists were located in Pattani province and the northern border areas of Narathiwat and Yala as well as in Satun province. These various separatist groups had not consolidated their efforts and the RTG believed the CTO in the area would eventually return to Malaysia. Therefore they $\frac{100}{100}$ relegated this problem to last priority. Even though the CTO was principally directed toward increasing cross-border operations, the threat to Thai authority in the region increased as the CTO propagandized and recruited within the Thai/Muslim (Malay) community, where communication between this predominately Malaysian population of the border and the Thai officials and police was minimal.

A prime example of this lack of cummunication was the National Security Command 10kw radio station which began psychological operations (psyops) broadcasting from Narathiwat in June 1970. Despite the fact that the language of 80 percent of its potential audience was Malaysian, 60 percent of the programming was in the central Thai dialect, 20 percent in local Thai dialect, and only 20 percent in Malaysian. Approximately 75 percent of the population in the far-south were Thai-Muslims and informal surveys indicated that most of the Thai-Muslims in the area listened to Malaysian broadcasts. Consequently, the psyops message did not get to its most important audience. In another instance, Border Patrol Police (BPP), with the assistance of several Information Service employees, prepared



psyops posters in Malaysian to explain BPP activities to the overwhelmingly Muslin rural population of Narathiwat. At the insistence of BPP head-quarters in Bangkok, these posters were printed in Thai rather than Malay, resulting in the message not reaching the Muslim community.

In general, the CT in the midsouth concentrated on organizational activities, primarily through propaganda and food and money collection. In their attempts to neutralize local RTG authority they resorted to increased terrorist activity which proved effective in Phattalung. The CTO in the far-south had an extensive organizational and support structure with an estimated strength of from 1,400 to 1,600. By the end of 1970 it was apparent that sustained RTG efforts over a period of years would be required to make serious inroads into the CT or CTO organizations in the South.



CHAPTER VII

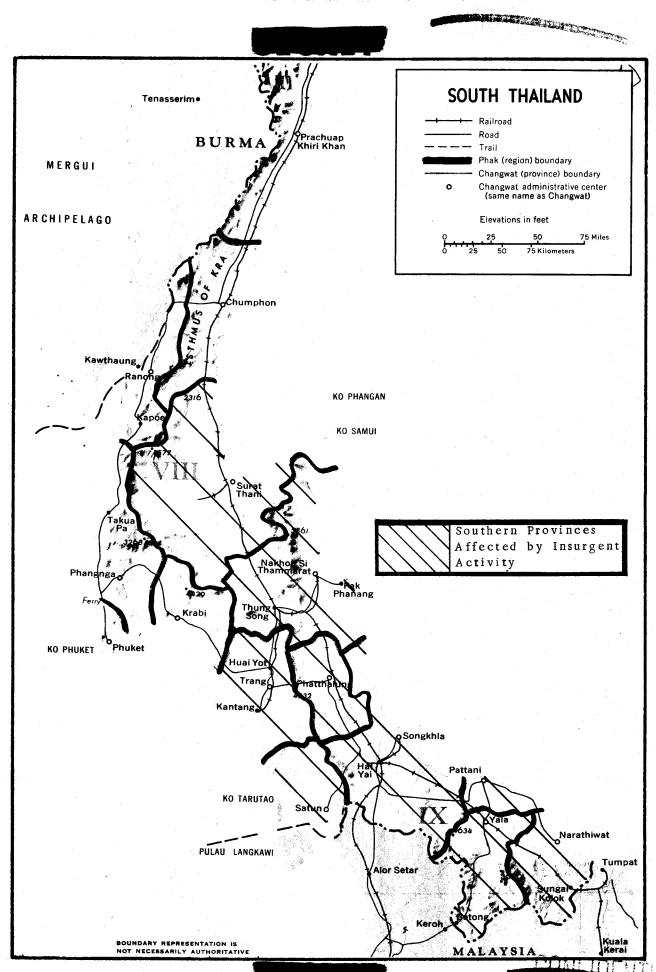
In addition to armed COIN action the RTG used nonmilitary measures to combat the insurgency in Thailand during 1969 and 1970. As early as 1966 the RTG had embarked on an ambitious and widespread development program, primarily in the Northeast. These early projects were long-range and expensive and consisted of roadbuilding, electrification, irrigation, dams, reservoirs, and other projects to help improve the lot and economic status of the people in that region. Coupled with these programs was a civic action program which included well digging, vaccination, improvement of livestock, and diversification of agriculture. While many of the RTG programs had failed, others had succeeded, as evidenced by a new road system in the Northeast, new dams, artificial lakes and reservoirs. The electrification program for the Northeast also proceeded relatively well, 104/ but further development was contingent upon the Mekong River Project.

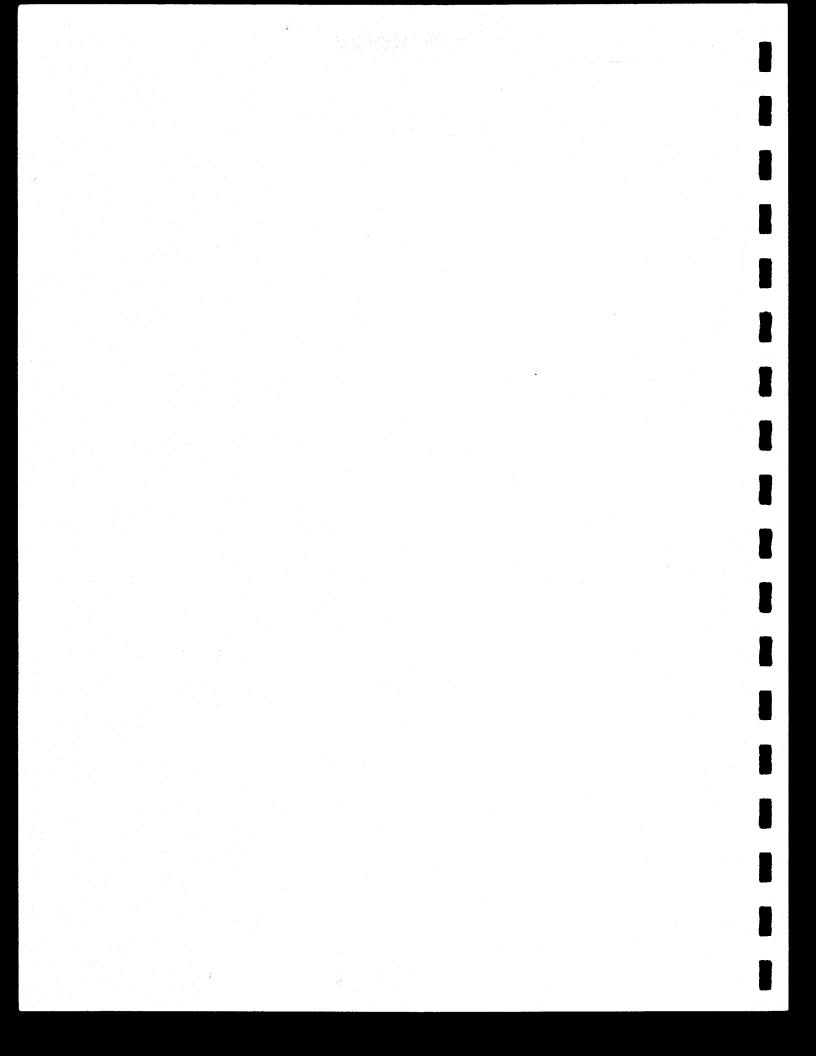
To fill the void and speed up their efforts, the RTG in 1966 requested that the U.S. government assist in establishing a para-medical counter-insurgency effort. The 606th Civic Action Center (CAC) was organized at Nakhon Phanom, RTAFB with the main objective of training Thai medical personnel to take over and operate medical centers in the Northeast. Working with Thai trainees, the 606th CAC provided medical treatment annually for more than 540,000 Thai civilians. In addition, the center provided dental care, dental hygiene, rabies control, and sanitation

programs. With this support the RTG provided medical service to the majority of the population in Nakhon Phanom province. While the 606th was extremely effective medically, it was not as successful in transferring responsibility for the program to the Thais who were slow to assume the responsibility and hard-pressed to provide the quantity of resources required to maintain the program.

Under the plan "Guidelines for U.S. Civic Action and Community Relations," U.S. military participation in the civic action program was limited by restrictions placed upon it by the American Embassy and MACTHAI. As a result, emphasis was on reduction of U.S. military participation in projects in the remote areas of the country and on the consolidation of efforts around those facilities where there was a heavy concentration of American personnel. There were several reasons for this discontinuance of U.S. support. Initially the objective was to get the RTG interested in a worthwhile civic effort. Thus the 606th CAC had completed its primary task of assisting in the establishment of the program. Secondly, indefinite continuation of these programs tended to compete with the responsible RTG ministry and encouraged the use of American support as a crutch. The phaseout was planned over a year's time in order to allow transition to Thai support in a manner that would reflect favorably upon both governments. Finally, the U.S. mission policy was to reduce American military presence to a minimum, particularly in the remote CT-threatened areas of the Northeast where the communists were propagandizing with the theme that the RTG was an ineffective puppet government dominated by the U.S.







In October 1968 the American Embassy directed the unilateral implementation of the phaseout plan for 1 February 1969 "without waiting any longer" for Thai cooperation. On 10 February 1970 the 606th was notified 107/by Headquarters PACAF to terminate its operation on 28 February 1970.

Prior to the final deactivation of the 606th the Embassy published instructions which restricted U.S. civic action activities to within 16 kilometers of USAF-tenanted bases.

There was little attempt on the part of the RTG to replace services of the 606th CAC because of the cost and the lack of trained personnel to conduct the program. Base Civic Action Officers and hospital personnel at the various bases continued to provide some medical services but on a much smaller scale. This was accomplished through the Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP). Under MEDCAP, visits were made to selected villages by medical personnel from the base hospital and representatives from the Thai public health service. The American doctors on the visiting teams would diagnose the problems of the villagers and then it became the responsibility of the public health authorities to provide follow-up treatment. In 1970 the MEDCAP program was responsible for the inoculation of more than 38,000 Thais and the medical treatment of another 20,000 during visits to more than 288 different villages in areas surrounding USAF-tenanted bases.

Basically, the new U.S. military civic action effort was designed to help the RTG provide essential services for the people, thus enhancing the government's image. Part of the U.S. Air Air Force assistance was through

the mobile information unit visits in which RTG/U.S. teams traveled to villages for film presentations and talks with the people regarding the local government. Many of the local officials had never been seen by the villagers until these teams made their presentations. Air Force civic action units also participated in dam and road building projects, the most recently completed of which was a \$20,000 irrigation dam in NKP province. They also placed considerable emphasis on the potable water problems in the Northeast during the dry season. Although the people around the bases in the central area seldom suffered potable water shortages, the villagers in the Northeast around Udorn and NKP continued to experience wells going dry $\frac{108}{108}$ and water pumps becoming inoperable.

Regardless of what the program was, all civic action was designed primarily to strengthen base security by creating a favorable attitude around the bases. The total impact of the USAF civic action programs was difficult to measure but, undoubtedly, it aided the RTG COIN effort in the Northeast. The episode at Ubon in January 1970 when villagers in the area gave the RTG and base officials advance warning of an impending terrorist attack was probably an example of civic action efforts reaping COIN benefits. By giving the warning the villagers went to considerable risk and faced possible reprisals by the communist terrorist, but the value of friendly relations created by the civic actions program appeared to make the risk seem worthwhile.

FOOTNOTES

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- (S) 7/13AF (DI), "Causative Factors of Insurgency in Thailand," 30 April 1969.
- 2. (S) Interview, Capt. Dan Adair, JUSMACTHAI, Internal Security Analysis Center, Northeast Desk Officer, 23 March 1970 (Hereafter cited: Adair Interview.)
- 3. (S) JUSMACTHAI, Internal Security Briefing, 28 October 1970.
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. (S) Rprt, Maj. Gen. James F. Kirkendall, Deputy Commander, 7/13AF, 13 October 1970 (Hereafter cited: Kirkendall Debriefing.)
- 6. (S) JUSMACTHAI, Internal Security Briefing, 28 October 1970.
- 7. Ibid.

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- 8. (S) Ltr, PACAF (DI) to 7/13AF (DSP), subj: Insurgent Developments in Thailand, 15 December 1968-15 March 1969
- 9. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 10. (S) Msg, American Embassy, Bangkok to 7/13AF, subj: "Recognition of RTG COIN Efforts," 25 July 1969 (Hereafter cited: RTG COIN efforts.)
- 11. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 12. (S) PACAF Intelligence Digest, Fourth Quarter 1969.
- 13. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 14. Ibid.
- 15. (S) PACAF Intelligence Digest, Fourth Quarter 1969.
- 16. <u>Ibid</u>.

17. (S) Field Information Report, FT 13-15,419, 28 January 1970. (Hereafter cited: FIR.)

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- 18. (S) Ltr, from PACAF (DI) to 7/13AF (DSP), subj: "Insurgent Developments in Thailand, 15 December 1968-15 March 1969."
- 19. (S) Quarterly Airgram on Insurgency, July-September 1969, dtd 17 October 1969.
- 20. (S) DOD Report, 1-656-0955-69, 12 June 1969.
- 21. (S) FIR, FTB-13-585, 11 February 1969.
- 22. (S) Quarterly Airgram on Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Thailand, October-December 1970, 25 January 1971. (Hereafter cited: Quarterly Airgram, October-December 1970.)
- 23. (S) Quarterly Airgram on Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Thailand, April-June 1970, 23 July 1970. (Hereafter cited: Quarterly Airgram, April-June 1970.)
- 24. (S) Interview, Capt. Richard A. Voltz, JUSMACTHAI, Internal Security Analysis Center, Northern Desk Officer, 23 March 1971. (Hereafter cited: Voltz Interview.)
- 25. <u>Ibid</u>.
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- 107. (C) Rprt, Col. Edwin J. White, Jr., Commander, 56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 5 October 1970.
- 108. (S) Interview, Lt. Col. Edward E. Westlake, Civic Action Officer, 7/13AF, 15 June 1971.

GLOSSARY

ARD	Accelerated Rural Development
BPP	Border Patrol Police
CAC CHICOM CIF COIN CPM CPT CSOC CSOD CSOR CT CTO	Civic Action Center Chinese Communist Chinese Irregular Force Counterinsurgency Civilian-Police-Military Communist Party of Thailand Communist Suppression Operations Center Communist Suppression Operations Directorate Communist Suppression Operations Region Communist Terrorist Communist Terrorist
нту	Hill Tribe Volunteer
JST JUSMACTHAI	Joint Security Team Joint U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
LRRP	Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol
MACTHAI MEDCAP	Military Assistance Command, Thailand Medical Civic Action Program
NKP NSC	Nakhon Phanom National Security Command
OSI	Office of Special Investigations
PARU PFF Psyops	Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit Police Field Force Psychological Operation
RCT RTA RTAF RTAFB RTG RTN	Regimental Combat Team Royal Thai Army Royal Thai Air Force Royal Thai Air Force Base Royal Thai Government Royal Thai Navy

TPLAF	Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces
VDC	Village Defense Corps
VMU	Village Military Unit
VOPT	Voice of the People of Thailand
VPU	Village Protection Unit
VSDU	Village Security and Development Unit